

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 USUN 2191

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: AFIN, UN, AORG, TSPA

SUBJECT: UN ADMINISTRATION - COMMITTEE ON CONFERENCES

SESSION, JUNE 20-JULY 1, 1977

1. SUMMARY: COMMITTEE ON CONFERENCES HELD TWO-WEEK SESSION JUNE 20-JULY 1, PRINCIPAL PURPOSE OF WHICH WAS TO CONSIDER ITS OWN FUTURE, I.E., WHETHER TO RECOMMEND TO NEXT GA THAT IT BE CONTINUED BEYOND JANUARY 1, 1978 EXPIRATION OF ITS MANDATE AND IF SO WHETHER ITS TERMS OF REFERENCE SHOULD BE CHANGED. IN THE EVENT COMMITTEE DID NOT REACH THIS ITEM ON ITS AGENDA AND WILL MEET AGAIN LATER IN SUMMER FOR THIS PURPOSE. IT SPENT MOST OF ITS TIME ON A SECRETARIAT PROPOSAL FOR IMPROVED UTILIZATION OF CONFERENCE RESOURCES AND IN INTERMINABLE WRANGLING OVER THE VENUE OF THE NEXT MEETING OF THE LEGAL SUBCOMMITTEE OF THE COMMITTEE ON PEACEFUL USES OF OUTER SPACE. END SUMMARY

2. OPTIMUM UTILIZATION OF CONFERENCE RESOURCES.
AFTER LONG DEBATE WHICH TOOK UP MUCH OF FIRST WEEK OF COMMITTEE ON CONFERENCES' JUNE 20-JULY 1, SESSION, THE COMMITTEE DECIDED TO RECOMMEND THAT THE GA AUTHORIZE THE SYG TO QTE OVER-PROGRAM UNQTE MEETINGS AND INTERPRETATION SERVICES DURING 1978 AT A LEVEL WHICH WOULD ENSURE
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MAXIMUM USE OF THE PERMANENT CADRE OF INTERPRETERS AND MINIMIZE THE OVER-RECRUITMENT OF TEMPORARY STAFF. QTE OVER-PROGRAMING UNQTE MEANS THE SCHEDULING OF MEETINGS BEYOND THE CAPACITY OF PERMANENT STAFF IN THE LIGHT OF EXPECTED CANCELLATIONS, WHICH RAN ANYWHERE FROM 8 TO 63 PERCENT PER WEEK DURING 1976. SECRETARIAT OFFICIALS SAID THEY HAD ENGAGED IN OVER-PROGRAMING OCCASIONALLY BUT PREFERRED STRONG GA BACKING, AND SUGGESTED THEY BE AUTHORIZED TO

OVER-PROGRAM UP TO AN AVERAGE OF 20 PERCENT. THIRD WORLD MEMBERS OF COMMITTEE RESISTED THIS HIGH A FIGURE, AND IT WAS ULTIMATELY DECIDED NOT TO MENTION A SPECIFIC PERCENTAGE.

3. THE COMMITTEE ALSO ADOPTED SEVERAL GUIDELINES FOR SECRETARIATS OF OTHER COMMITTEES DESIGNED TO TIDY UP THEIR WORK PLANNING AND INCREASE THE COST-CONSCIOUSNESS OF THEIR COMMITTEES, WITH A VIEW TO MINIMIZING THE WASTAGE RESULTING FROM CANCELLATIONS OF MEETINGS.

4. MEETING RECORDS.

THE COMMITTEE TOOK ANOTHER LOOK AT PROGRESS IN REDUCING REQUIREMENTS FOR MEETING RECORDS. IT FOUND LITTLE IMPROVEMENT EXCEPT IN THE APPLICATION OF THE ONE-STAGE SYSTEM OF MEETING RECORDS WITH CORRIGENDA, WHICH HAD MET WITH GENERAL SATISFACTION AND HAD ALREADY SAVED SEVERAL HUNDRED THOUSAND DOLLARS. (HERE THE SECRETARIAT OBSERVED THAT THE EVENTUAL USE OF WORD-PROCESSING TECHNIQUES WOULD MAKE REVERSION TO A TWO-STAGE SYSTEM CHEAP). THE COMMITTEE RECOMMENDED THAT THE GA URGE THAT BODIES ENTITLED TO MEETING RECORDS DISPENSE WITH THEM WHEN THEY ARE NOT ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY. IT ALSO SUGGESTED CONTINUATION OF THE SO-CALLED QTE TEN CRITERIA UNQTE ADOPTED BY THE GA IN 1975 ON AN EXPERIMENTAL BASIS FOR CURBING UNNECESSARY MEETING RECORDS.

5. RULES OF PROCEDURE FOR PLEDGING CONFERENCES.

COMMITTEE WAS ASKED BY THE SECRETARIAT (THE OFFICE OF LEGAL AFFAIRS IN THE FIRST INSTANCE, TOGETHER WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF CONFERENCE CONFIDENTIAL

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SERVICES) TO FACILITATE CONSIDERATION BY THE GA OF A PROPOSED STANDARD SET OF RULES OF PROCEDURE FOR PLEDGING CONFERENCES, WHICH WOULD SAVE DOCUMENTATION AND TIME. SEVERAL MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE, PARTICULARLY LDC REPS, HAD MISGIVINGS ABOUT THE PROPOSAL WITHOUT LOOKING INTO ITS POSSIBLE POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS, BUT A CONSENSUS CONFINED TO APPROVING ITS ADMINISTRATIVE UTILITY APPEARED TO BE IN THE MAKING WHEN THE USSR REP LET IT BE KNOWN PRIVATELY HE WOULD NOT COOPERATE ON THIS QUESTION IF HE DID NOT GET HIS WAY ON THE VENUE OF THE OUTER SPACE LEGAL SUBCOMMITTEE (SEE BELOW). THE MATTER WAS DROPPED, BUT COULD BE REVIVED LATER.

6. INTERSESSIONAL DEPARTURES.

COMMITTEE APPROVED A SEPTEMBER 12-16, 1977 SESSION FOR THE AD HOC COMMITTEE ON THE WORLD DISARMAMENT CONFERENCE, AND A JULY 18-22, 1977 SESSION FOR THE AD HOC WORKING GROUP TO INQUIRE INTO THE SITUATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN CHILE. IT POSTPONED ACTION ON A SEPTEMBER 6-9, 1977 RESUMED SESSION FOR THE AD HOC COMMITTEE ON THE RESTRUCTURING OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL SECTORS OF THE UN SYSTEM.

7. US AND CANADIAN DELS DISSOCIATED THEMSELVES FROM COMMITTEE'S EARLIER DECISION TO APPROVE GENEVA AS THE VENUE FOR AN AUGUST 8-

19, 1977 EXTRA SESSION OF THE COMMITTEE ON CONTRIBUTIONS.
MAJORITY OF COMMITTEE ON CONFERENCES HAD APPROVED GENEVA RATHER THAN
NEW YORK, DESPITE FACT THAT OVERALL COST FIGURES FOR NEW YORK
WERE LOWER (COST TO UN OF PAYING TRAVEL OF COMMITTEE ON
CONTRIBUTIONS MEMBERS WAS AN IMPORTANT FACTOR IN EQUATION).
ARGUMENT FOR GENEVA WAS THAT PLANS HAD ALREADY BEEN LAID BY
COMMITTEE ON CONTRIBUTIONS FOR MEETING THERE, ITS CHAIRMAN
CLEARLY PREFERRED GENEVA, AND COST DIFFERENCE WAS ONLY A FEW
THOUSAND DOLLARS IF COMMITTEE ON CONTRIBUTIONS COULD COMPLETE
ITS WORK IN LESS THAN TWO WEEKS; THE COMMITTEE ON CONFERENCES
RECOMMENDED THAT THE COMMITTEE ON CONTRIBUTIONS COMPLETE ITS
AUGUST WORK IN LESS THAN THE TIME ALOTTED AND WAS ASSURED THIS
COULD PROBABLY BE DONE. USREP NEVERTHELESS SAID COMMITTEE ON
CONFERENCES HAD MADE UNWISE DECISION WHICH WOULD BE AN
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UNFORTUNATE PRECEDENT.

8. COMMITTEE DISCUSSED SOME DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS URGING THAT
REQUESTS FOR INTERSESSIONAL DEPARTURES BE KEPT TO A MINIMUM AND
THAT THEIR FINANCING BE MAINLY FROM APPROVED APPROPRIATIONS, AND
WILL COME BACK TO THIS SUBJECT IN AUGUST.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 USUN 2191

9. CALENDAR OF CONFERENCES.
PRELIMINARY APPROVAL OF THE 1978-79 CALENDAR OF CONFERENCES WAS

DELAYED BECAUSE OF AN UGLY DISPUTE WHICH BROKE OUT OVER THE VENUE OF THE MARCH 1978 SESSION OF THE OUTER SPACE COMMITTEE'S LEGAL SUBCOMMITTEE. THE DRAFT CALENDAR ASSIGNED THE SESSION TO NEW YORK PURSUANT TO THE 1975 GA DECISION, ON RECOMMENDATION BY THE COMMITTEE ON CONFERENCES, THAT THE LEGAL SUBCOMMITTEE SHOULD GIVE UP ITS PRACTICE OF ROTATING ITS ANNUAL SESSIONS BETWEEN NEW YORK AND GENEVA, AND BEGINNING IN 1977 IT SHOULD MEET IN NEW YORK. USSR DELEGATE FEDOROV PROPOSED THAT THE LEGAL SUBCOMMITTEE BE ASSIGNED TO GENEVA IN 1978, POINTING OUT THAT IT HAD SO RECOMMENDED AT ITS NEW YORK SESSION THIS YEAR. USREP COUNTERED THAT COMMITTEE ON CONFERENCES NEEDED TO BE GIVEN BETTER REASONS THAN IT HAD BEEN GIVEN BEFORE FOR THE GENEVA VENUE BEFORE IT COULD REVERSE ITS 1975 DECISION. BELLIGERENCE AND LONG-WINDEDNESS OF USSR REP ON THIS SUBJECT INTENSIFIED AND EFFECTIVELY PREVENTED COMMITTEE FROM DOING ANY OTHER MAJOR BUSINESS IN CLOSING DAYS OF ITS SESSION, INCLUDING ITS PLANNED CONSIDERATION OF ITS OWN FUTURE.

10. SECRETARIAT (BUDGET DIVISION) PRODUCED FIGURES SHOWING LEGAL SUBCOMMITTEE'S SESSION WOULD COST LESS IN GENEVA BASED ON ASSUMPTION OF ALL LOCAL HIRE IN GENEVA AND NO LOCAL HIRE IN NEW YORK. SECRETARIAT (CONFERENCE SERVICES) POINTED OUT HOWEVER THAT CONFIDENTIAL

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SESSION IN NEW YORK COULD PROBABLY BE HANDLED ENTIRELY BY PERMANENT STAFF (THUS SESSION WOULD ALMOST CERTAINLY REQUIRE SUBSTANTIALLY LESS ADDITIONAL EXPENDITURES IF HELD IN NEW YORK; FURTHERMORE THERE WOULD BE NO TRAVEL COSTS FOR OUTER SPACE STAFF.) FINALLY, PHONE CALL TO VIENNA ELICITED INFO THAT OUTER SPACE COMMITTEE HAD JUST APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY LEGAL SUBCOMMITTEE'S RECOMMENDATION FOR 1978 GENEVA VENUE, BEARING IN MIND THE FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS SET FORTH IN A/AC.105/L.96. THEREUPON USSR REP MADE FINAL EFFORT TO BROWBEAT COMMITTEE INTO CHANGING CALENDAR BUT SO MANY MEMBERS WERE ANGERED BY HIS TACTICS THAT CONSENSUS WAS REACHED TO POSTPONE DECISION UNTIL COMMITTEE'S AUGUST SESSION.

11. EXPANSION OF CONFERENCE FACILITIES AT HEADQUARTERS. THE COMMITTEE WAS GIVEN PAPERS AND DIAGRAMS ON THIS QUESTION AND HEARD A BRIEF SECRETARIAT EXPOSE, BUT SOME DELEGATIONS ARGUED STRONGLY THAT THIS MATTER (INVOLVING CHOICE OF WHETHER TO SPEND LARGE SUMS) WOULD COME BEFORE ACABQ AND FIFTH COMMITTEE, AND COMMITTEE ON CONFERENCES SHOULD LEAVE IT ALONE. ONE OR TWO DELEGATIONS ASKED QUESTIONS, AND SUBJECT WAS THEN PUT ASIDE.

12. BERNAL VARGAS-SABORIO (COSTA RICA) REPLACED AHMED ABOL GHEIT (EGYPT) AS A VICE-CHAIRMAN.

13. COMMENT: PREVAILING SENTIMENT IN THE COMMITTEE APPEARS TO BE IN FAVOR OF ITS CONTINUATION. THE UK DELEGATION IS STRONGLY OPPOSED BUT SAYS LONDON IS INCLINED TOWARD CONTINUATION. USUN BELIEVES COMMITTEE'S RECORD OF ACCOMPLISHMENT IN THREE YEARS IS SCANTY BUT

PERCEPTIBLE. FURTHERMORE, THERE IS SOME EVIDENCE THAT FACT THAT REQUESTS HAVE TO GO THROUGH IT DETERS OTHER BODIES FROM ASKING FOR THE MOON. A SMALL FORUM FOR THRASHING OUT CONFERENCE SERVICING ISSUES, CONFRONTING SOUND MANAGEMENT PRINCIPLES WITH THE MYRIAD PRESSURES TO DEVIATE FROM THEM, IS ON THE WHOLE A HEALTHY THING. THUS WE FAVOR CONTINUATION OF THE COMMITTEE
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AND WILL ATTEMPT TO GET ITS MANDATE STRENGTHENED, ALTHOUGH THIS WILL BE DIFFICULT. ONE PROBLEM FOR THE COMMITTEE IS THE WEAKNESS OF ITS NEW CHAIRMAN, NICHAE OKEYO OF KENYA, WHO IS HAVING DIFFICULTY GUIDING THE DISCUSSION AND COPING WITH THE SUBJECT MATTER. WE WILL BE ALERT FOR ANY WAY TO IMPROVE THIS SITUATION, BUT SEE NONE AT THE MOMENT.
LEONARD

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